An overlooked subspecies of the African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

by P. A. Clancey

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In the most recent revision of the races of the African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus,* Brooke (1972) recognised 5 forms from the mainland of the Afrotropics, the eastern littoral populations ranging from southern Somalia to Natal being grouped in a single subspecies, namely, *Cypsiurus parvus laemostigma* (Reichenow), 1905: southern Somalia. Brooke describes *laemostigma* as having the most heavily streaked throat of the any of the continental races. Before Brooke, Sclater (1924), following Grant (1915), treated *C. p. laemostigma* as a synonym of *C. p. myochrous* (Reichenow), 1886: Karema, Tanzania. By the normal course of events a race of a highly polytypic species described in the first instance from Somalia is unlikely to occur in Natal and Zululand.

A recent examination of the material of the African Palm Swift in the Durban Museum—from Inhaminga, Sofala district, southern Mozambique, from Humani Ranch, Sabi R., Zimbabwe, as well as from still further south both on the littoral from Manhiça, north of Maputo, southern Mozambique and also from the Natal coast (Durban district)—indicates that birds agreeing with *laemostigma* as defined by Brooke range no further south than the Save R. Those present in the far south of Mozambique and now occurring in Natal (coast and lower midlands) and Zululand are distinctly warmer and buffier brown throughout and have the throat finely streaked with brown, the streaking restricted to the upper fore-throat. This far southern population differs from all the described south-central and southern African forms, *viz. C. p. hyphaenes* Brooke, *C. p. myochrous* and *C. p. laemostigma,* and deserves to be recognised. It may be known as

Cypsiurus parvus celer subsp.nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Manhiça, north of Maputo, southern Mozambique, at 25° 24'S, 32° 48'E, 15 September 1955. Breeding in exotic palms. Collected by Durban Museum personnel. D.M. Reg. No. 13 631.

Description: Differs from *C. p. myochrous* and *C. p. laemostigma* in having the mantle, rump and upper tail-coverts browner (Hair Brown (Ridgway 1912)) less cold greyish, with little or no visible whitish scaling. Below, the fore-throat streaking restricted to the anterior surface, the streaks browner and the light interstices buffier. Rest of ventral surface warm brownish as opposed to grey (about Drab *versus* Mouse Gray), with little evidence of whitish scaling. Size as in *myochrous* and in the southern population of Brooke's *laemostigma.*

Measurements: Wings (flattened) of 8 ♂♀, 130–141 (135.9), σ3.82; tails of 7, 93–109 (98.9), σ5.21 mm.

Brooke gives the wings of East African *laemostigma* as ♂♂ 122–135 (127.1), ♀♀ 119–130 (125.0) mm.

Material examined: 10 (*Natal:* Durban and near Durban; *southern Mozambique:* Manhiça, north of Maputo).

Range: Coastal and lower midland Natal (Pietermaritzburg, Greytown), Zululand, eastern Swaziland, eastern Transvaal and Mozambique south of the Limpopo R. The form is probably endemic to southern Mozambique,

having spread in recent times to Natal with the introduction of exotic palms and the erection of suitable structures on which it nests.

Measurements of the type: Wing 141, tail to tip of longer of 2 tail filaments 109 mm.

Remarks: The name selected for the new subspecies is from the Latin *celer,* swift, speedy, darting.

The races of the Palm Swift, *C. p. hyphaenes, C. p. myochrous* and *C. p. laemostigma,* are all greyer than *celer,* less warm brownish, with the throat streaking variable on a whiter ground. *C. p. hyphaenes,* described from Kumgha, on the Botletle R. in northern Botswana, is the palest of the assemblage with the white interstices of the throat streaking carried further down to the upper breast. *C. p. laemostigma* is a trifle darker above than *hyphaenes* but better marked over the venter, the dark throat streaks more intense and the breast and belly darker. *C. p. myochrous* is somewhat intermediate. The distinctions west (from northern South West Africa and southern Angola) to east (south of the Zambesi R. delta) are not always particularly clearly marked, and the range situation obtaining along the mid-Zambesi is particularly confusing (see map in Brooke 1972, and comments on races in this sector by Irwin 1980).

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Notes on the Palm Crow *Corvus palmarum* in Haiti

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The Palm Crow *Corvus palmarum* is confined to Cuba and Hispaniola. A few notes on its status, diet, flight, voice and nesting are summarised by Goodwin (1976) from the publications of Wetmore & Swales (1931), Barbour (1943) and Bond (1971). However, the species remains poorly known and it is apparently now uncommon, so notes made on a brief visit to Haiti in September 1981 are reported here.

Palm Crows were seen only at elevations of 1300–1900 m in the Massif de la Selle (south of Port-au-Prince). Three crows together were seen near Furcy, several pairs and groups of 3 along c. 15 km of footpath between Furcy and the summit of the pass above Seguin (road then in hopeless disrepair due to land-slips), and a compact flock of at least 20 just south of the summit of the pass. All the crows were seen in or flying between pine trees, which grew in small groves and lines, often near houses. However, the country was mostly only sparsely wooded with extensive terraced gardens